

Scientific and Technical Employee Development (STED) Conference Call March 22, 2007

Committee members:

Name	Role/Affiliation
Steve Blanchard	WRD Senior Staff
Virginia de Lima	Center Director
Dorrie Gellenbeck (not present)	NWIS
Bob Hainly (Chair)	Data Chiefs
Bill Hazell	Hydrologic Technician
Leo House	NRP
Mike Nolan (not present)	OSW
Dave Pollock	OGW
Kurt Schultz (not present)	IT Specialists
John Trommer (not present)	Studies Section Chiefs
Alan Ward	OED
Franceska Wilde (not present)	OWQ

Meeting Introduction:

- Bob Hainly opened the teleconference and reviewed the agenda. No additions or changes to the agenda were made.
- Bob announced that the note-taking for the meeting would continue to rotate among committee members. Bill Hazell will be the note taker for this conference call.

Comments on the minutes for the November 2006 meeting:

- These minutes are on the STED web page but the link is dated 02/15/2007. Bob will check.
- No changes to the minutes were made.

Comments on the minutes for the February 2007 conference call:

- Date listed on top of minutes needs to be changed from February 1, 2006 to February 1, 2007.
- Bob will leave these out for the committee to review for another week before posting on the web.

Review of the Action Items Log:

- Bob continues to reduce number of action items listed to highlight only the top priorities.
- Donna's ability to wrap up action item assignments is difficult since she is more involved in ICOM.
- Bob will make updates as a result of actions during this call.

Priority Action Item Status – Recommendation to Senior Staff:

- WRD budgeted distributed on 3/19/07. Bob Hirsch will distribute funding among programs around 3/26/07. Optimistic outlook is to have budget completely distributed by early April.
- Appears that some plusses (NSIP & Coop Programs) and minuses (HN&A Program) among WRD funding may indirectly affect ability to fund request from STED as reserve funds are a big unknown. Tight program budgets may require use of WRD reserves.
- Alan is concerned about the timing and being able to hire a contractor in this FY.
- Although the numbers may not be ready for the next quarterly Senior Staff meeting in mid-April, Steve can take this request to the weekly meeting—possibly by the end of April.
- He will send the draft request to STED for review before presenting it at meeting.
 - **ACTION ITEM – Steve to go to Bob Hirsch and Senior Staff with request at first opportunity after WRD has a final budget.**

Priority Action Item Status – Course-Conversion Priorities:

- OSW (Steve) – Data-Aging and Editing Unit Values course conversions are complete.
- OSW – Hydro-Acoustics Introduction is next priority. May need financial assistance to complete.
- OSW – Will develop about 5 more hours worth of TEL courses and then will focus on getting Mike Nolan's streamgaging instruction CDs online.
- OSW - Virginia asked Steve if there were any plans for analytical type courses (low-flow, etc). The current perceived needs from OSW are data-collection and processing courses.
- NWIS (Steve) - Contact has been made with the NWIS Steering Committee to get on the agenda but development of TEL courses has not been discussed specifically.
- NWIS – Staff time or funding outside person will be ranked among NWIS priorities. Enhancement of code is their number 1 priority. Priorities are set by the NWIS steering committee.
- NWIS – Training topics will most likely be generated from users groups.
- OGW (Dave) - No new progress. OGW is hesitant to make the time commitment. Dave will talk to Bill Alley but does not anticipate any nominations for course conversion.
- OGW - Some GW courses may be more suited to the narrated PowerPoint type of presentation. Some analytical GW courses may be well suited for TEL conversion.
 - **ACTION ITEM – Dave will check on potential for conversion of GW Principles course.**
- OGW – Important for Discipline Offices to consider immediate training needs of workforce.
- OWQ – Conversion of WQ Principles course is ongoing.
- OED - Trying to determine a good estimate for the time it takes to develop a course. Current estimates range from 100 to 400 hours required for every hour of course time. Suggested an average of about 150 hours per hour.

Priority Action Item Status – TEL Course Tuition

- Bob suggested that the current draft was a good start towards a draft policy and some good edits had been made but was unsure how to get from where we are to where we need to be.
- Virginia is reconsidering some of her thoughts from the original draft based on Alan's comments.
- Three concepts are still being considered: 1) An annual WSC assessment, 2) A per FTE WSC assessment, and 3) A variable fee depending on the course-conversion and delivery cost.
- There was much discussion centered on the concept of having a flat fee of about \$60 per WSC FTE beginning in FY08 that would allow access to all purely TEL courses and charging additional tuition (surcharge) for the blended courses.
- A \$60 fee is based on about 3,000 WSC FTE's and estimated \$170K annual TEL expenses.
- Tuition for blended courses would be determined on a course-by-course basis. With this fee structure in place, STED would not request additional funding from Bob Hirsch in FY08.
- Alan suggested that as TEL conversion costs decrease in future, tuition could be reduced or surplus could be used to enhance resources for conversion or delivery.
- A menu of TEL courses would provide an opportunity to develop anticipated skills at a nominal cost to WSC's.
- Positives of per FTE tuition:
 - Ease of management of funds for HQ and WSC Directors.
 - If paid for in advance, there is a greater potential for participation and completion.
 - Reduces financial and time constraint impediments to training.
 - Overall time and money savings when compared to travel and salary costs for NTC.
- WSC Directors need to be polled for their response in a way that would result in a quantitative result to present to the senior staff along with the tuition fee policy recommendation from the committee. This will provide the financial feedback necessary.
 - **ACTION ITEM – Virginia will put a draft statement together and e-mail to committee members for input and then**
 - **ACTION ITEM – Virginia will present tuition fee idea to NE Directors during March 23 conference call.**
- WSC Directors will be encouraged to solicit input from their respective Data Chiefs to provide the technical feedback. Direct contact also needed with Data Chiefs.
 - **ACTION ITEM – Bob will request time on the agenda for the national Data Chief meeting in St. Louis during the first week of April.**

- Concerns were raised about costs to outside attendees and developing courses for other disciplines. This discussion was tabled.

Wrap-up

- Draft minutes of this meeting will be distributed for committee review.
- Bob will continue to update action item log and email to STED.
- Bob will also look for ways to improve the STED web page using the new ITAC web pages as a model.
 - **ACTION ITEM** – Bob will send link for ITAC page to OED, work with Alan, TJ, and Ralph to re-design the STED web page, and provide new page to committee for review.

Next conference call is scheduled for Thursday, May 31, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm EDT.